

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

GENERAL NOTES.

THE GENOTYPES OF ECHIMYS AND LONCHERES.

In a recent article* Mr. Oldfield Thomas has assumed that *Rattus* G. Fischer (1814) is available as the generic name of 'le rat épineux' of Azara, being unaware that Hollister† had already traced the use of the name *Rattus* in a generic sense back to 1803, when it was used by G. Fischer himself in a way to make *Mus decumanus* the genotype of *Rattus*, which thus must displace *Epimys* Trouessart (1881), as maintained by Hollister. But Thomas's new "application of *Rattus* among the Octodontidæ" leads him "to the much-discussed question of what species is the type of *Echimys*, F. Cuv., 1809." He refers to my fixation of the type upon *Echimys spinosus*, "on the ground of elimination," in 1899,‡ but considers my fixation of the type overthrown by the fact that Fleming in 1822§ selected '*Hystrix chrysurus*' as the type of *Echimys*. "If then," he continues, "as we are compelled to do, we accept Fleming's selections the name *Echimys* will become the correct term for the animals known as *Loncheres*, with *Echimys chrysurus* as the type, while the genus typified by Azara's *Espinoso* will have to bear another title." I fail to see that this necessarily follows, for the following reasons:

Echimys F. Cuvier, 1809, contained only two species, 'le Lérot à queue dorée' of Allemand (*Myoxus chrysurus* Zimmermann, 1780), and 'le rat épineux' of Azara. Therefore one of these two, as they are not congeneric, must be taken as the type of *Echimys*. One of these species became, in 1811, the type of *Loncheres* Illiger. This left in *Echimys* only one of the two original species, namely, 'le rat épineux' (*Echimys spinosus* Desmarest, 1817), which automatically, under modern codes of nomenclature,|| became irrevocably its type. (I said, writing seventeen years ago, before the expression became taboo, "by the process of elimination.") *Loncheres* Illiger also contained nominally two species, (1) *L. paleacea*, a species not described till nine years later, and therefore a nomen nudum,

* On *Rattus* as a Generic Name, with a Note on the Nomenclature of *Echimys* and *Loncheres*. Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist. (8). XVIII, pp. 70-72, July, 1916.

† The Generic Names *Epimys* and *Rattus*, Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, XXIX, p. 126, June 6, 1916. It is evident that Thomas could not have seen Hollister's paper, which preceded his in publication by only about three weeks.

‡ The Generic Names *Echimys* and *Loncheres*. Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XII, pp. 257-264, Dec. 26, 1899.

§ Philosophy of Zoology, II, 1822, p. 191.

|| See Opinion 6, International Zoological Commission.

and (2) '*Hystrix chrysuroides* Lin Gmel.'=*Myoxus chrysurus* Zimm. Therefore *Loncheres*, when founded, was virtually monotypic, with *Loncheres chrysurus* (Zimm.) type by monotypy.

In my paper published in 1899 (*l. c.*) all the details of the two cases of *Echinys* and *Loncheres* were fully presented, and interested readers are referred to that paper for their fuller history.

—J. A. Allen.

THE TYPE SPECIES OF RATTUS.

In a late paper,* Mr. Oldfield Thomas calls attention to my recent statement† that *Mus decumanus* (= *Rattus norvegicus*) is the type species of *Rattus* Fischer, 1803,‡ and decides that the type of that genus is *Mus rattus*. The question is just now one of more than usual importance. In view of the standard set for murine genera by Mr. Thomas in recent work on African mammals, it is highly desirable that the type species of *Rattus* be determined beyond doubt, for the Norway and black rats represent groups as much entitled to generic rank as many sections of murine genera recently given distinctive names. Whatever the final decision on the case, the proposal of Mr. Thomas seems to be far from satisfactory.

The most simple way out obviously would be to accept *Rattus* from its original publication alone, the type species to be *Mus decumanus* by monotypy. As Mr. Thomas, in another connection, has recently put it:§ "We have not to deal with what Cuvier [in this case Fischer] meant to do, but with what he did do," and he certainly published the Latin name *Rattus* as a new generic name and mentioned by name only one species, *Mus decumanus*. The case in that respect is very different from that of *Rattus* Donovan, 1827,|| because Donovan actually mentioned *Mus rattus* in his description of the new species of the "rat tribe" *Rattus donovani*,¶ while Fischer lists the single species *decumanus* in exactly the way we nowadays mention a representative or type species.

Mr. Thomas argues that [although only a single species, *Mus decumanus*, is included by name in the genus by Fischer] the "genus is distinctly made for the 'Ratte,' French 'Rat,'=*Mus rattus*, the mention of *Mus decumanus* being merely as 'the most remarkable of the other species.'" This translation of Fischer is in itself misleading. What Fischer, who was describing the mammal gallery in the Paris museum, really says is: "Die merkwürdigste unter andern Gattungen dieses Geschlechts ist die Wanderratte (*rat surmulot; Mus decumanus*)"—that is, among the different species of this genus [on exhibition] the most remarkable is *Mus decumanus*. The case of *Troglodytes*, in ornithology, is in some respects similar to the case of *Rattus*. Vieillot, in describing some American wrens, proposed the new generic name *Trog-*

* Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., Ser. 8. Vol. 18, p. 240. August, 1916.

† Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, Vol. 29, p. 126. June 6, 1916.

‡ Nationalmuseum der Naturgeschichte zu Paris, Vol. 2, p. 128. 1803.

§ Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, Vol. 28, p. 181. November 29, 1915.

|| See Hollister, Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, Vol. 29, p. 126. 1916.

¶ Nat. Repos., Vol. 3, text to pl. 73, 1834 [1827].